The Battle of Berlin by Joseph Goebbels

The English press has called the series of terror attacks on the Reich capital, which has been continuing for three months with only occasional pauses, the "Battle of Berlin." They have left no doubt that the intention of the British war leadership is to destroy the Reich capital with these brutal and horrible attacks, or as they themselves say, to depopulate it, to crush the war morale of its population, and thus win on the German home front the decisive victory that our fighting soldiers have denied the Anglo-Americans thus far in this war on the front, and that our soldiers will continue to deny them in the future. There is no one in Berlin who would not know that, also no one who would not be firmly determined to resist these terrorist intentions of the enemy with the whole force of his soul and his unbroken heart, thus bringing the enemy's plan to naught by a great common effort of heroism. When we discuss this subject today outside the circles of the Berlin population, it is because it involves much more than the direct interests of the population of Berlin do. Since the middle of November of the past year, Berlin has been fighting a defensive battle for the entire German people. The Reich capital is representing the cause of the Reich at a decisive point and at a decisive moment.

It is not yet clear today what that means for the city and its future. It is generally known that metropolises usually have an unenviable place in people's thinking. They are the seats of government and thus of bureaucracy. They are the source of rules, regulations, and tax laws, things that as a rule cause more grief than joy for citizens. The situation of the Reich capital is made more difficult by the fact that it is still young, achieving its historical task late in its development. And the temperament of its population can only be understood and appreciated by someone who has learned them by being there for many years, one who alongside its undeniable weaknesses has also learned its higher values and virtues. Berlin is more a melting pot than a city that grew in an organized manner. Beside the original Berliners, whom the Berliners themselves say are spread so thinly as to almost be rare creatures, it recruited its population from all occupations, classes, and tribes of the Reich. Berlin has an enormous attractive force that always binds to it the human masses that stream to it from everywhere in the land, absorbing them into the huge structure of this city of millions. It has therefore no local patriotism, but rather much more city pride.

One really does not know why the legend developed, and not only with the enemy but also among certain parts of our own people, that Berlin is especially sensitive to outside threats because of its colorful, thrown-together population. Those parts of the Reich that had already suffered enemy terror bombing were therefore somewhat concerned that the day would come when the Reich capital would have to endure the great test. We Berliners ourselves, sure of our own strength and hardness, were convinced that the proof could only be provided by facts. The Reich capital has had more opportunity to do that in the past three months than it likes. Not many cities in the Reich have undergone the same tests in this war, and Berlin does not need to be embarrassed before any of them. Its population has faced enemy air terror with a bravery that deserves the greatest admiration. No one anywhere in the Reich disputes that, and those abroad as well, as long as they have maintained an accurate and objective outlook, are full of praise and admiration. The Reich capital has passed its great war test.

It would naturally be pointless to deny that the enemy has given heavy wounds through his brutal and horrible terror. Until now, we have refrained from replying to his boasting accounts of the air war, the cynicism of which can scarcely be surpassed. There will be time enough for that when we once again stand equal. The jubilation in London will be more modest after a relentless German answer, which will once again permit a factual discussion. Even today, the German Luftwaffe is responding with gradually growing massive counterattacks, but these are only a foretaste of what is still to come. We can in any event be satisfied that the German capital has remained unbroken under the burden of enemy attacks. The British capital will have opportunity to provide the same proof.

In Berlin as in all the other German cities affected by enemy air terror, we have learned to simplify our lives, returning to a primitive war style that has taken from us many of the pleasures of everyday life. We are now marching with a lighter pack. Along with the other populations of other German districts affected by heavy enemy air terror, we have learned to do without some things that are still taken for granted in those parts of the Reich that have been spared. It would be an exaggeration to say that has been easy for us. It deeply hurts a city to see significant parts of its housing, its artistic and cultural monuments, its churches, theaters, and museums, reduced to soot and ashes. Still, that is bearable when the freedom of the nation and the maintenance of the life substance of a people require it. We have no wish to make that a matter of patriotic pathos. We bear the hard demands that the

nation's fate place on us not with glowing enthusiasm, but with bitter resistance that always gives the strength to overcome the heavy and heaviest blows, opposing them with a spiritual strength that towers over all doubt.

That is decisive. A great city earns its face not only through its dwellings, buildings and monuments, but above all through its people. Despite the former widespread view, Berlin is more than an asphalt desert or a collection of big apartment buildings. Over four million industrious and decent people live in its densely populated area. They may be known throughout the Reich for their cool and even skeptical outlook on the problems of life, but a great and brave heart beats behind it all, one able to overcome any danger. The Berliners have given more than sufficient proof of that over the past difficult weeks, showing the German people without saying so that their city is not unworthy to house the leadership of the Reich within its walls, providing thereby the great driving force of our national policy and war leadership.

The entire German people have been raptly and intensely following the so-called Battle of Berlin over these past weeks. We can assure it that the battle will end well. The Reich capital will probably endure new blows. There will be even more wounds, scars and tears in its face. Its citizens will pull together even more and learn to deal with even more primitive conditions. But Berlin will not perish. The heart of this city has never beaten so strongly as it does during the nights of heavy bombing, when so to speak the Berliners wipe the blood from their eyes and go to work with bitter defiance. There are wonders of work, splendid organization and an amazing ability to improvise. The city is a true socialist community and the solidarity of all helps to overcome some difficulties that could otherwise easily become impossible. Even at the most critical moments, I have never given this city, its population, its party or its government offices a task that was not resolved with lightning speed. The Berliners do not give up in the face of the misfortunes sent by their hate-filled enemy, but rather they gather their whole strength against them and always overcome them.

The intent of the Anglo-American war leadership is doubtless to persuade large parts of the German people through air terror, making them ripe for lying and hypocritical divisive propaganda. It is almost a bloody irony that at the same time he drops unimaginable quantities of explosive and incendiary bombs on densely populated residential sections of our large cities, he also rains down thick stacks of hypocritical leaflets. He apparently believes that our men and women who have lost everything through this cowardly and

wholly unmilitary method of warfare will sit down in the glow of their burning homes and perhaps by the corpses of their innocent children to read these worthless leaflets, letting themselves be told what they should think about the war by of all people the corrupt British plutocracy. This is how the criminal English leadership imagines the German people. They used such methods to subordinate colonial peoples and plunder them for their capitalist purposes. Now they want to avoid the great battle they fear more than anything else.

When our civilian population does all it can to resist, it is playing an active and direct role in the larger war. They are attacked in an unmilitary way, but defend themselves militarily. Their high morale in this pitiless battle is a decisive, perhaps the decisive, factor of the war. From it come all the other forces and virtues needed to master the disaster. If they succeed, their strength and determination grow. Iron is hardened only through hammer blows.

Our people have a great task to fulfill in this generation. It must repair many sins and failings of the past to create an indestructible future foundation for our national life. Never before in our history has the historic mission of the German Reich been as concentrated as in the years from 1914 to today. It is the great age that calls us all. There is no holding back, no excuse. What we do or not do can never be undone, for either good or evil. We are responsible for the most decisive historical epoch of our people. How we resolve it will determine whether we earn the future blessings or curses of our children and grandchildren.

As the sky over Berlin begins to turn bloody in the nights of heavy enemy terror attacks, we all think with pain and bitterness of the huge amount of pain and sorrow again descending on thousands of our fellow citizens. Nothing remains undone to help them bear the burden of misfortune. Even during the attack, a huge organization begins to move, and within a few hours, its results are everywhere visible. Hard and conscientious work join with passionate fanaticism and bitter rage to achieve ever new major accomplishments.

What could the city's leadership accomplish were not the entire population behind it, supporting its measures through soldier-like behavior, giving drive and force to the work of restoring our wounded life! Thus, it always and everywhere was when the enemy fell on our cities with fire and

conflagration and the population had to help themselves to defend their existence. Berlin now stands in the midst of those cities that are marked with sorrow and proud defiance. It wants to be no more than the rest of them. It wants only to show that behind the big words that in the past did not always make it beloved, there are also great deeds when required. What contempt cities such as Hamburg, Essen or Cologne would have for the capital of the Reich if we were weighed in the balance and were found or would be found wanting!

It gives occasion to think to everyone else, not only to those cities. The coat of arms of the Reich capital today bears the laurel wreath of military glory that will never fade. Where in these weeks walls fall and buildings collapse, a New Berlin will spring from the ruins, and every brick will bear witness to the heroic courage of a city that remained unbroken, never wavering, despite the severest blows.